

Hold fast to dreams
For if dreams die
Life is a broken-winged bird
That cannot fly.

Hold fast to dreams
For when dreams go
Life is a barren field
Frozen with snow.

— Langston Hughes

Introduction

The American Dream. What is it? What does it look like? How does it feel? Is it quitting your job and building a multimillion-dollar income? Is it a single mom being able to provide a bright future for her children? Or is it a millennial who busts the myth and starts a highly successful business without a college degree, like the founders of Apple and Microsoft? For me, it was about finding a way to focus on my family, my passion, and make enough money to save for a rainy day.

What do you dream about? A quick look at social media posts, TV shows, or political ads tells us that phrases like “American Dream” or “Living the Dream” resonate with the vast majority of people. Why is it, then, that so many people feel that their Dream is getting farther and farther

away? I believe that opportunities to build a successful business are more abundant now than ever before.

With every disaster, financial meltdown, war, or pandemic, new needs arise. Some people make fortunes by meeting those new needs. Why not let that person be you? Some of the companies that got started during severe economic downturns, such as Proctor and Gamble, IBM, Burger King, Publix Supermarket, General Electric, and IHOP, are now household names. Do you feel passionate about something but are too busy making a living? Do you feel hopeless after the loss of a job you've worked your whole life for? Do you have a special gift or skill? Do you like helping people? If you've answered "yes" to any of these questions, then you are ready to start building a successful business, and now is a better time than ever before to get started.

In the past couple of decades, we've been through several catastrophes that have altered how we live, make a living, and travel. Most recently, we've suffered through a pandemic that has created new demands by consumers across all facets of our lives. In this book, I will show you how to turn your ideas or hobbies into a profitable business, help you lay out a realistic path forward, and show you the proven tools you will need to build your own successful business without having to sacrifice your family time. Yes, it's possible to have it all. I know because I've done it. I hate cliches, but I don't know how to say it any other way. If I can do it, you can, too. I promise I will show you how I did it. According to Confucius, a thousand-mile journey starts with the first step. I can't wait for you to take the first step in your journey.

Let's start this life-altering journey with a story about a little girl who used to look out at the horizon in a small coastal town in South Korea, wondering what lay beyond the horizon. Could it be America, the land of opportunity, where all dreams come true?

Years later, her family started their life in America with only thirty dollars. She had to learn a new language, adapt to a new culture, start attending middle school, and help take care of her four younger siblings. She had to overcome depression, bigotry, discrimination, hypocrisy, and hopelessness. Her parents worked at two jobs each just to put food on the table, and it seemed like her father's vision of the American Dream was just that—a dream.

I was that little girl. Today, having created a business with over \$500 million in retail sales and an amazing family life, I am living "The Dream." I do what I love for a living—designing jewelry with my own TV show without sacrificing my personal life. Yes, I actually get paid to share my hobby with millions of customers. But for me, the most important fact about my life is that I get to spend an unlimited amount of time with my family without having to worry about money. I am living proof that if you can dream it, you can create it. Let me tell you why.

I was born in South Korea at a time when every young girl's future was limited to being a good wife and mother. Affluent families sent their girls to college to earn female-friendly degrees, such as home economics, music, or art. My parents were considered affluent back then with a nice house on the beach, private school education for their children, and a cook for the family. As good as our life was, they felt compelled to move their family to America, where all four of their daughters, and their son, could be free to reach their full potential.

Shortly upon arrival, our family finances were quickly frozen, and we ended up having to survive on thirty dollars cash in my father's pocket. My parents were always working, and the only times I saw them were when they left for work at six in the morning and when they came home after dark. I tried my best to wake up at the same time as my parents because the only thing I could do at that age to help was to let them know I would take care of my four younger siblings for the day.

After high school, I earned degrees in Economics from UCLA and an MBA (Finance and Marketing) from USC, but I had a tough time finding the perfect job in Los Angeles. I was offered several top-paying jobs in NYC, but I couldn't see myself moving away from my family. I took a temporary job in the marketing department of a jewelry company. I loved my job and was great at it.

One day, while stuck in bumper-to-bumper traffic, I had an epiphany. I was spending three hours a day in traffic and working twelve to fourteen hours a day helping to build someone else's American Dream. My husband and I had just gotten married, and we both wanted to start a family of our own someday. I couldn't envision myself pregnant, let alone taking care of toddlers, with my job. I had to try something different, but what? My husband and I were already broke, so starting a business and draining what little we had was not a realistic option, either. Then I would ask myself, why am I here? What was my purpose in life? No matter what, I convinced myself that I wasn't born just to starve and be miserable.

I left a great job with a good salary and started my own company in 1989 on a \$15,000 budget. I felt both the fear and the excitement of the unknown. What if I go bankrupt in the first year like so many small businesses do? Everyone around me said that the odds of my business succeeding were slim and none. I had read that something like 75 percent of all small businesses fail in the first year, and the odds are even worse in the second year. I feared losing everything—my savings, my job, my reputation—but I felt that I had no choice. I made more than my share of mistakes and, at times, struggled more than I ever imagined possible. There were plenty of times when I doubted myself, but giving up was never an option. I learned from my mistakes and, more importantly, learned from other people's mistakes as well. In this book, you will find out how I built a multimillion-dollar business by focusing on my family first.

Despite appearing on live TV for the past twenty-three years, I still feel uncomfortable talking about myself. Talking about even small successes in my life feels like I'm being arrogant, boastful, or even disrespectful. I didn't want to tell my life story because it felt pretentious. Who am I to be giving advice to others about their lives? Then I asked myself, "How many people are out there desperately searching for a way to have enough time and money to live the life they want to live?" I needed to share my journey because I've been exactly where you are now—too afraid to get excited, even though you have a special gift inside that's screaming to get out and is ready to be shared. I promise to share all of the major mistakes I've made so that you'll have a much easier path to success. In this book, I will show you how to turn your passion or expertise into a profitable business so you can love what you do, make more money, and start living the life you've always wanted.

This book is organized into seven “myth-busting” steps:

Chapter 1

Define ... The Dream

Clear definition of the dream.

What is your why?

Goal setting—quantifiable, achievable, aspirational, and measurable.

Chapter 2

Overcome ... The Fear

Fear is natural and is in our DNA.

The five Cs essential to overcoming fear—courage, consistency, confidence, curiosity, and character.

Chapter 3

Ignite ... The Big Idea

Discovering your best opportunity—the biggest idea.

Your true gift.

Passion to profits.

Chapter 4

Target ... The Audience

Ideal target market.

Finding a specific niche.

Where do they gather in large groups?

Marketing on a shoestring budget.

Chapter 5

Negotiate ... The Deal

Structuring your value proposition.

The three-tiered pricing.

Finding suppliers.

Negotiating with vendors.

Chapter 6

Optimize ... To Monetize

The pros and cons of different business models.

Business to business.

Business to consumer.

Combination model.

Affiliate business partners.

Chapter 7

Win ... The Game

Prelaunch—testing your product or service with real customers before you launch.

Fine tune based on feedback.

The perfect launch.

Post launch.

Bonus Chapter—Grow and Scale

Various growth models.

Strategies for dominating in your industry.

Economies of scale for revenue generation and cost savings.

Conclusion

I believe that the American Dream is more attainable now than ever before. Anyone with a phone, computer, and a few dollars can start a business and succeed. The world is more connected than ever, and you have access to a global marketplace in the palm of your hand at any time. You do not need a fancy education, loads of money, or an “inside” connection. You don’t even need to be an expert in a particular field. What you *do* need is a great idea backed by desire and perseverance. If you are a high-level executive in corporate America, you’re using your talents to help your company make millions or even billions every day. What is stopping you from using your talents to build the life you want? If you are recently unemployed through no fault of your own, what do you have to lose? If you are a stay-at-home mom and have a little

bit of downtime while your children are at school, what do you have to lose? By the end of this book, you will:

Discover your true gift and identify your mission in life.

Turn your ideas or hobby into a profitable business or even a multimillion-dollar empire.

Learn how to test your idea before taking financial risks.

Learn how to start a business on a budget you feel comfortable with.

Learn how to market your business to your target audience.

Learn how to scale your business to attain sustainable growth.

Learn how to increase your income by doing what you love, and live the life you want to live instead of the life you think you have to live.

Lastly, think about this: Subway was started by a seventeen-year-old teenager with only \$1,000, and Starbucks was founded by two teachers with \$1,000. Many of the companies that we think of as “indispensable” these days, such as Google, Facebook, Microsoft, and Apple, were started with less than \$5,000. You might just be that person who starts the next big thing that changes life as we know it.

My road to success was paved with obstacle after obstacle, and there were times when I wondered if I would make it out of the valley. My parents couldn’t help me beyond high school, and I had no mentors or colleagues to lean on. Each time my business hit a critical junction that

required me to make difficult choices, I chose the option that included high-quality time for my family, which actually took my business to new heights every time. I am confident that you already have what it takes to succeed. All you need to do is make a decision to take the first step toward your goal.

